



## Hikes Near the Nature Center



Boulder Bridge

### 3-Mile Boulder Bridge Hike

This three-mile hike through Rock Creek Park is an excellent way to explore the park. Visitors enjoy the closure of Beach Drive between Military Road and Broad Branch on the weekend and can spend time leisurely relaxing in the forest, appreciating the natural and cultural wonders of the park.

To access this hike from the Nature Center, walk south toward the Horse Center. Turn left into their parking lot and walk to the wooden fences straight ahead. The trail-head is directly to the left of these fences. This trail leads you to Picnic Grove 22 and Rock Creek. Along the creek you will notice many rapids. This is due to a geologic transition zone where the Piedmont Plateau meets the Atlantic Coastal Plain.

After crossing Rapids Bridge and Beach Drive, you will take a right onto the Valley Trail. This trail is blazed in blue paint slashes on the trees.

This will lead you up a hill to a grove of Mountain Laurel and eventually down to Boulder Bridge.

Cross Boulder Bridge and look for a small trail on the right leading up a hill. This connector trail will bring you to the Western Ridge Trail blazed in green. It is named as such because it is the ridge that was naturally created between Rock Creek and Broad Branch.

After you pass the Rock Creek Equitation Field walk to the left into the wooded area. If there are few leaves on the trees, you may catch a glimpse of the National Cathedral in the distance to the west. As you go farther north look for some of the few remaining Virginia pines that are in Rock Creek Park. Then follow this trail all the way back to the Nature Center.

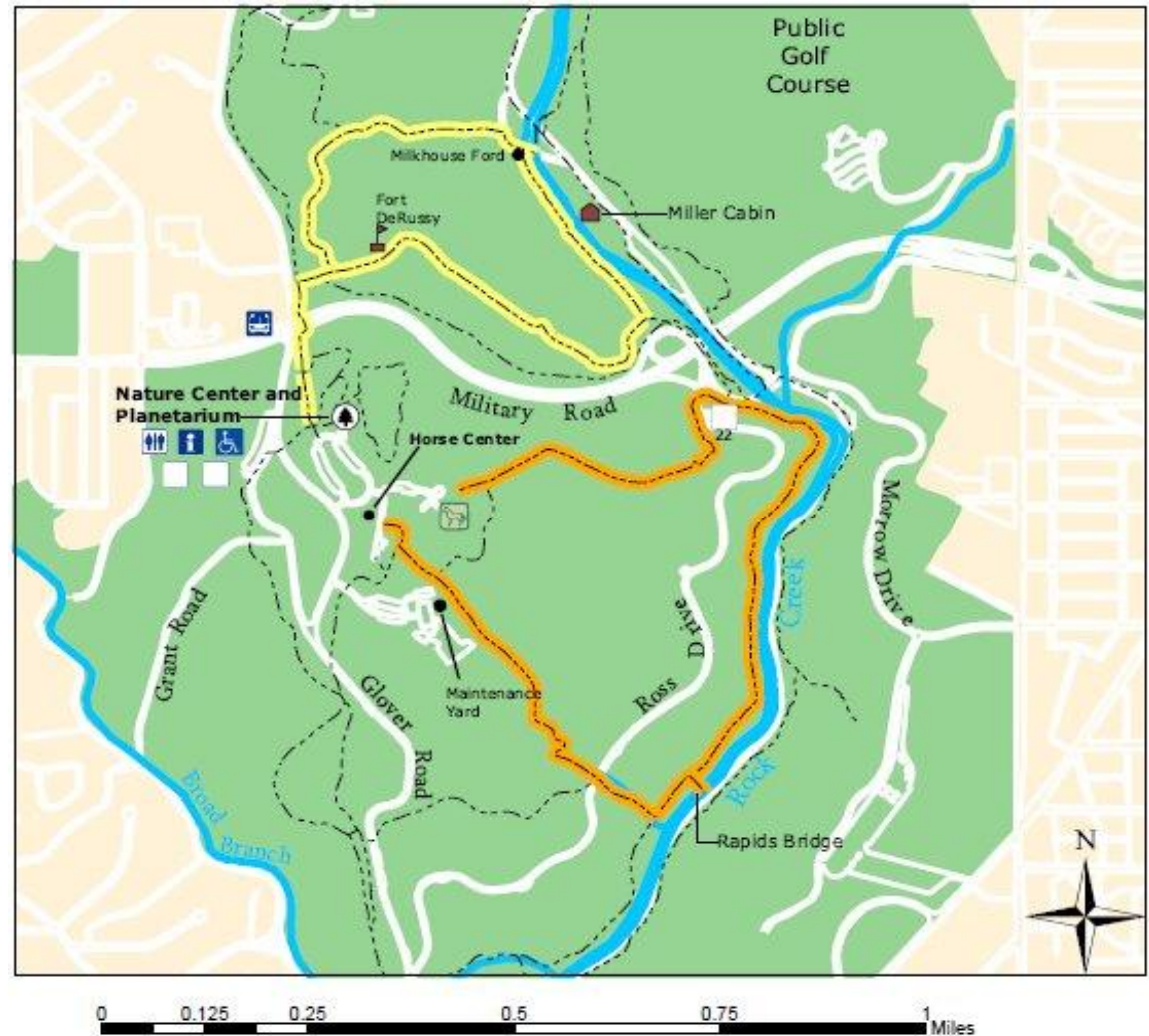


## Milkhouse Ford Hike

This 1.75 mile hike is a fun diverse walk that takes about an hour and a half. walk down the paved bike path from the Nature Center and cross Military Road. Walking east you will quickly find yourself near Fort DeRussy, which is a Civil War fort used in the Battle of Fort Stevens to defend Washington, DC. The earthen mounds still remain and are a treat for visitors to explore. The trail continues along a thicket of Spicebush and Viburnum. Notice the distinctly scented Sassafras when the trail starts to descend to the creek. Walking north, you will find yourself above Rock Creek overlooking Beach Drive and Picnic Grove 6. At Picnic Grove 6, notice Miller Cabin, dedicated to the California poet, Joaquin Miller. Farther north, you come to Milkhouse Ford, which was used in the past as a crossing point for vehicles. At this point you will and the trail that leads west and will loop you back around toward the Nature Center.

## Rapids Bridge Hike

This 2-mile hike is an excellent weekend hike that parallels one of the most beautiful portions of Rock Creek. This trail can be accessed near the Horse Center. From the Nature Center, walk south through the parking lot and take a left into the Horse Centers parking lot. Ahead, you will see wooden fences. The trail head is directly to the left of these fences. Walking east, notice the many hardwood trees such as Tulip Poplars and smooth-barked Beech trees. White-Tailed Deer and foxes frequent this area! This trail will take you to Picnic Grove 22 where you will turn south to walk along Rock Creek. Notice the abundance of picturesque rapids and granite outcroppings. These rapids are caused by what is called a fall line, which is a transition point where the Piedmont Plateau meets the Atlantic Coastal Plain. Soon you will see a pedestrian bridge, known as Rapids Bridge, crossing Rock Creek. The bridge provides an awesome vantage point to witness the creeks beauty. Just south of Rapids Bridge turn right heading west up a steep trail that will lead you under the Ross Drive Bridge. Continue on this trail past the maintenance yard and bad to the Horse Center.



### Legend

- Nature Center Hike
- Rapids Bridge Hike
- - - Hiking Trails